

# February 2025 Teacher Collaboration Sessions

## Session Documentation

### Exploring Loose Parts

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#### Discoveries

- I was noticing similarities – symmetry, organizing piles, making a picture.
- I made an instant connection and was done – but then reflected on the done-ness and added more to it.
- Not everything worked the way I wanted it to.
- My peers made creative/inspirational connections
- Complexity emerges over time
- They can represent anything.
- Loved the leaf ribbon
- It tapped open creativity.
- You could find what you wanted/needed
- There's flexibility in loose parts
- So many textures
- Because the parts move, mistakes were not permanent

#### Worries and Possible Strategies!

##### Putting Items In Mouths

- Providing a "chewy"
- Teaching expectations
- Once children know the expectations, peers can help you monitor and alert you to problem uses of the materials.
- Sit with them, provide extra monitoring when in a space with loose parts
- Have supports in place for children who put things in their mouths – have the chewy ready, have their own set of items that are safe to put in a mouth.
- Offer more intensive or complex loose parts experiences when that child is absent.
- Prepare a sanitizing bucket. Items that go in the mouth, go in the bucket.

## Dumpers, Throwers

- Sit with them with ready reminders and redirection
- Prepare redirection experiences – e.g. *If you want to pour and dump, you can go to the touch table. OR, I notice you really like to dump these materials. Come over here. You can dump here.*
- Observe to try to figure out the need that the child is meeting with their dumping and throwing.
- Teach expectations. Develop agreements – *How do we take care of our materials? Where do our materials live? What do we do when we are done with the materials?*
- Offer opportunities for restoration with help – *I will help you clean up these items. OR, let's see if a friend will help us clean up these items (then ask children who LOVE to organize and clean up).*
- Use your "super sorters" when items get jumbled together.
- Consider offering loose parts in a location which makes clean up easier – invitation on a floor space, in a touch table.
- Rather than telling children to "clean up," ask them to reorganize the materials for the next person.

## Coveters or Children Who Want To Take Loose Parts Home

- Make sure there is enough. Limiting materials can have a scarcity effect causing children to want to hoard because they are worried they won't have what they need.
- What are children trying to hoard or take home. Can you make sure you have enough or reassure that it will be safe until tomorrow.
- Use SAVE signs so that children can save their work.
- Take photos of children's work with loose parts and share with family.
- Consider a loose parts lending library – where children can bring home a bag or box of materials to be returned later (plan on not all materials returning).
- Give each child a pencil box for special "treasures" to save.
- Approach loose parts with planning and intention. Most are very inexpensive, recycled materials, or natural materials. Budget for some replacement just as you budget for consumables like paint and paper.

## How Much Do You Offer?

- Make sure children have enough, especially in the beginning when trust is not yet fully present.
- Ask, *What's your plan for these items?*
- Use a tray rather than a bucket.

### How To Use Invitations or Prompts to Guide Exploration

- Look at Section 3 of your Documenting Learning binder – lots and lots of question examples
- See what happens when children explore the materials. What do *they* notice?
- Model and co-build, gradually release responsibility for leading the building to the child.
- Take pictures of children's creations. Share those photos during group time. Invite creators to share what they did/created OR describe what you noticed for children who do not yet have the language skill to fully share.
- When you offer a prompt for children (e.g. *What stories will you find in loose parts?*), it is not a directive. Rather, it is an umbrella under which children can find many things to do.
- At first, 1 or 2 children may explore. When you share photos of those creations with the group, others will be inspired to join.

### Organizing and Storing Materials

- Consider building a loose parts library – see photos in slide deck. Loose parts are taken from the library and used in places around the room.
- Locate baskets, bowls and trays of parts in various areas around the room for integration into play and exploration
- Organize and display loose parts in a way that brings you joy. What do you want to look at?
- How and where you store and display parts may depend on your group of children year to year.
- Display and storage grows with time and experience. Your loose parts display at the end of the year will look quite different from your display at the start of the year.